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OBITUARY.

The Council regret that they have to record the loss by death of the following Fellows and Associates during the past year :—

Honorary Member :—Agnes Mary Clerke.*
Fellows :—Alexander Stewart Herschel.
William Johnston.*
Zufur Jung.
Lord Kelvin.
David Joseph Kennelly.
Peter Matthews.
Thomas Perkins.
James George Petrie.
Edward Power.
George William Read.
Thomas Robson.
Edward John Routh.
Henry Chamberlain Russell.
William Simms.*
Associates :—Asaph Hall.
Jules Janssen.
Maurice Loewy.
Charles Trépied.
Hermann Carl Vogel.

An obituary notice is also given of James Kennedy Esdaile, who died in January 1908.

JAMES KENNEDY ESDAILE, the eldest son of the late Edward Esdaile, of Ockly, Surrey, was born in 1840. He was educated at Charterhouse, and afterwards at Peterhouse, Cambridge, taking his M.A. degree in 1871. In 1876 he married Florence, only daughter of the late George Crawshay, of Houghton Castle, Tyneside, Northumberland. Until 1889 he lived at Saint Hill, near East Grinstead, where he had a small private observatory and occupied himself in observation of sun-spots. More recently he lived at Horsted Keynes, where he died, 1908 January 6. He was a Magistrate and Deputy-Lieutenant for Sussex, and in 1881 was High Sheriff for the county.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society 1872 February 9.

ALEXANDER STEWART HERSCHEL was the second son of Sir John Herschel, and the fifth of twelve children. He was born at the Cape of Good Hope in 1836, during the historic astronomical

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* Obituary in Annual Report for 1906.

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expedition of his father. He went (1851–55) to the famous Clapham Grammar School, where the Rev. C. Pritchard was doing pioneer work in the way of a scientific education for boys; and thence to Trinity College, Cambridge (1855–59), and to the Royal School of Mines (1861–5). He was then (1866) appointed Professor of Mechanical and Experimental Physics in the University of Glasgow, a position which he resigned in 1871 in favour of a corresponding Professorship at Durham; and from this he retired in 1886. From 1888 till his death in 1907 he lived with brother and sisters at Observatory House, Slough, the former residence of his grandfather.

Alexander Herschel was best known for his work on luminous meteors. He was himself a diligent observer, spending long hours in the open in the watch for meteors. His post of astronomical observation at Slough was necessarily different from that of his grandfather, for during the half-century following the death of Sir William trees had grown up in the garden where his great telescope used to stand; and when four of his grandchildren returned to Observatory House in 1888 (after half a century of occupation by strangers) they found a pleasantly shaded garden, but no horizon visible. Over the wall, however, in the kitchen-garden, where Sir William's forges and optical works used to be, there were no trees; and there Alexander Herschel would lie on his back and watch the broad sky for meteors. His observations are contained in a long series of small note-books, and every observation is numbered, starting each new year with unity again. The last observation is dated 1907 February 13. A hasty glance at these books with unskilled eyes suggests that probably there is a great deal of valuable material of which no use has yet been made. But a proper estimate of the value of his work in this field can only be given by a meteor observer, and Mr. W. F. Denning has very kindly written the following notes:—

"Professor Herschel's meteoric work was characterised by its remarkable accuracy, its comprehensive detail and large amount, extending over something like half a century. It not only embraced his personal observations, but comprised the comparison and reduction of a great number of materials sent in to him by various other observers in England and abroad. During a long series of years he collected as many descriptions as possible of the fire-balls which appeared from time to time, and calculated their real paths in the atmosphere.

"As a result of long practice, he acquired great precision in noting the flights of individual meteors amongst the stars, and could reproduce them on his charts with unusual fidelity. He observed the great meteoric showers of 1866, 1872, and 1885, and collected together the different values for the positions of radiation, and obtained their mean places. It was from his averaged radiant for the November Leonids of 1866 that Professor Schiaparelli was successfully enabled to deduce his conclusions on the virtual identity of the orbits of this meteoric stream and Tempel's comet of 1866.

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"An important paper by Professor Herschel appeared in the *Monthly Notices* for 1872, in which he called attention to certain showers presumably connected with Biela's periodical comet, and he pointed out the probability of a recurrence of the shower at the end of November 1872, advising observers to maintain a watch of the sky at this particular period. His anticipations were realised in a very notable manner by the occurrence, on November 27, of one of the grandest meteoric exhibitions of modern times, which fully substantiated the theory of close association existing between comets and meteors, and certainly demonstrated that the slow meteors returning at intervals at the end of November really represented the *débris* of the lost comet of Biela.

"Valuable work was accomplished by Professor Herschel in the calculation of the radiant points of comets. A complete list of his results, forming a valuable summary for reference and comparison, was published in the British Association Report, 1875, and in the same volume and also in *Monthly Notices*, vol. xxxviii. p. 369, he gave lists of known accordances between cometary and observed meteor showers. In collaboration with Mr. R. P. Greg, he formed several catalogues of the radiant points of meteors observed by the British Association members, including one giving 88 positions in 1868, and another of 63 positions in 1875 (British Association Reports, 1868, 1872, 1875)."

But though the work on meteors engrossed the greater part of his scientific activity, Alexander Herschel had many other interests. One of the chief of these was photography. His father was a keen and original photographer—the first man, it will be remembered, to use glass as a support for a photographic film (and the first picture he took in this way was of *his* father's great telescope). Alexander's devotion to photography was thus hereditary; and here, again, he not only worked assiduously himself, but stimnlated activity in others. In 1893 his portrait was presented to the South Kensington Museum by the Amateur Photographic Association, and among his treasured possessions was a beautiful album of photographs presented to him by the Newcastle-on-Tyne and Northern Counties Photographic Association (of which he was President, 1885–7) as a "slight acknowledgment of services rendered."

His brother, Colonel J. Herschel, has remarked on his extraordinary vitality; he nearly always *ran*, rather than walked, to his miscellaneous occupations, and his mental activities had two unfortunate results: he shunned the interruptions of society so far as to become practically a recluse, taking all his meals alone, and he became impatient of his bodily needs until the neglect of them shattered his health. He died on June 18, 1907, at the age of seventy-one, and on June 22 was buried in the grave at St. Laurence's Church at Upton, where his famous grandfather had been laid eighty-five years before.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society 1867 March 8.

H. H. T.